Cuxton Community Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118323
Local Authority	Medway
Inspection number	358314
Inspection dates	31 January 2011–1 February 2011
Reporting inspector	Alison Cartlidge

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	130
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ian Harper
Headteacher	Sandra Jones
Date of previous school inspection	26 March 2008
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Age group	4–7
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspection team observed eight lessons taught by five teachers. Meetings were held with members of the governing body, parents and carers, staff and pupils. The inspection team observed the school's work, and looked at pupils' books, information on pupils' progress, safeguarding policies and other documents. Questionnaires from 64 parents and carers, 65 pupils and 17 members of staff were scrutinised.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- Rates of progress across the school, especially in mathematics.
- How well teaching and the curriculum are meeting differing needs, especially for the boys.
- How well teachers involve pupils in learning through the use of assessment.
- The impact of all leaders, including the governing body, on driving improvement in teaching, learning and pupils' progress.
- How care, guidance and support enable pupils to enjoy school and to gain confidence.

Information about the school

This is a small infant school. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. The school has a well above average proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. These pupils have a wide range of needs, including speech and language, behavioural and emotional, and physical difficulties. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught in two Reception classes. The school has received several awards including the Activemark and the Basic Skills Quality Mark.

The breakfast club is run by an external provider and was not part of this inspection.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school? 2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement 2

Main findings

This good school provides outstanding care, guidance and support for its pupils, enabling them to feel exceptionally safe and to grow in confidence. Almost all parents are extremely pleased with the school and typically make comments such as, 'I'm delighted my children are being educated in such a positive environment' and 'My children have always been happy at the school, which gives me a lot of confidence.'

Children make a good start to their education in the Reception classes, particularly in their personal, social and emotional development. In Years 1 and 2, pupils continue to learn quickly because their progress is tracked rigorously, and imaginative teaching helps them to want to learn. Pupils make good progress in most lessons, although occasionally pupils are set tasks that are insufficiently purposeful or challenging, and when this happens, they do not learn as quickly as usual. Pupils' attainment is broadly average by the end of Year 2. A recent whole-school focus on developing writing has ensured that girls and boys are inspired to do their best, and attainment has risen to above average in this aspect of English. In mathematics, pupils are not always quick or accurate when carrying out mathematical calculations. The school has increased the frequency of mental mathematics sessions to boost pupils' skills and confidence, but there are occasions when not all pupils are fully involved. In addition, marking in mathematics is not always followed up quickly enough so that pupils can improve their work straight away. Pupils are polite and friendly, and enjoy helping others in school and the local area. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are identified quickly and given good support, enabling them to make good progress from their starting points.

There are good procedures for self-evaluation that enable the strongly committed leaders, including the governing body, to have an accurate understanding of what needs to be done next to improve the school even further. Procedures for keeping pupils safe are outstanding, and all members of staff know, and take responsibility for, looking after all pupils. Consequently, the school operates as a happy and caring family community. Leaders have been successful in improving standards in writing, including amongst the boys, and have well-advanced plans to raise attainment further in mathematics, demonstrating the school's good capacity to improve.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase pupils' ability to carry out mathematical calculations by:
  - ensuring that mental mathematics sessions always involve all pupils and encourage them to think quickly
  - using marking more rigorously to support rapid improvement.

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- Make sure that all teaching and learning is good or better by always providing tasks that are challenging and purposeful.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils 2

Pupils enjoy school very much and are keen to join in with the wealth of activities provided. For example, in an outstanding English lesson in Year 2, pupils were bursting with enthusiasm as they wrote their part of a whole-class story. They appreciated the computer-generated flow diagram that reminded them of the correct sequence of events. In a good Year 1 science lesson, pupils enjoyed sharing their knowledge about pushing and pulling when exploring the properties of a range of moveable toys.

Pupils' achievement is good. Attainment is broadly average, although it varies from year to year. Girls and boys make good progress and learn quickly in most lessons. Occasionally, learning slows when pupils are not fully involved in discussions in mathematics or when tasks are insufficiently challenging. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress because programmes are tailored to support their needs. For example, pupils worked in a small group developing their muscular strength through a sequence of specific exercises. Pupils' good progress in developing basic skills, along with their good personal development, prepares them well for the next stage of education and later life.

Most pupils behave well throughout the school day with only occasional inattentiveness towards the end of some lessons. Pupils say that they feel extremely safe at school and are happy that their concerns are dealt with swiftly. They have a clear understanding about how to stay safe. For example, they understand about 'stranger danger' and what to do if they are lost. Pupils take responsibility well and are particularly proud that they sing in a local festival, raise funds for charity and help each other in class. Pupils write prayers and help in assemblies. They show respect for others and have a good understanding about the difference between right and wrong. There are occasional instances of thoughtless behaviour, but these are rare. Pupils know how to stay healthy and enjoy keeping active at playtime and by eating healthy snacks. Although rates of attendance are no better than broadly average, this does not reflect pupils' enthusiasm for school, but is due to some families choosing to take term-time holidays contrary to the school's advice. The school is doing all it can to improve pupils' attendance.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	**2**
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment[1]	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	**1**
Pupils' behaviour	**2**
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	**2**
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	**2**
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	**2**
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance[1]	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	**2**

[1] The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

How effective is the provision?

Teachers and teaching assistants have very caring relationships with the pupils, and use praise successfully to encourage them to try hard and behave well. Resources, including information and communication technology (ICT), are used well to support learning. For example, pupils in Year 2 enjoyed using the computer to explore the properties of shapes by rotating them on the screen. Teachers have high expectations of what pupils should achieve and nearly all work engages the pupils' interest. Occasionally, the emphasis is on completing a task rather than on what pupils are expected to learn in a lesson.

Teachers and teaching assistants make good use of careful ongoing assessment notes for all pupils. Occasionally, this information is not shared clearly with the pupils to ensure that mistakes in mathematics are rectified as soon as possible. Teaching assistants are well informed and provide good support for individuals and groups of pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

The interesting curriculum makes good use of themed weeks, visits and visitors to bring learning to life, and topics enable pupils to practise skills they have learnt in English, mathematics and ICT lessons. It is clear why the school was awarded the Basic Skills Quality Mark, although occasionally opportunities are missed to support pupils' understanding of mathematical calculations in a wide range of contexts. Pupils appreciate taking part in additional activities, such as music, and demonstrated their good unaccompanied singing during the inspection in 'singing' assembly. There are plenty of

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opportunities for pupils to stay healthy and active, demonstrating why the school has the Activemark award.

Pupils are supported exceptionally well, enabling them to gain confidence and to feel valued. Strategies to support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities have a good impact, and pupils, including those with personal difficulties in their lives, are supported well, drawing on good links with parents and carers and outside specialists. Strong links with local schools, including pre-schools, makes transition a smooth process. Each pupil is treated as an individual by staff and their needs are a high priority.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	**2**
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	**2**
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	**1**

How effective are leadership and management?

Senior leaders embed ambition and drive improvement well because they are knowledgeable about what the school does well and how it should be improved. Strong teamwork enables leaders at all levels to be involved in school development and there is a great determination to raise attainment in mathematics so that it matches recent successes in writing. Leaders monitor teaching and learning and can demonstrate how support has led to improvement. They are working on ironing out the remaining slight variations in practice. The governing body carries out its statutory duties well and provides support and challenge for the school. A recent review of practice has rightly led them towards wanting to make lesson observations more focused so that they provide maximum benefit. Leaders promote equal opportunities and tackle discrimination robustly. The school includes all pupils well and uses assessment data to provide intervention when needed so that no groups of pupils fall behind in their learning. For example, recent work to make the curriculum more exciting for boys is narrowing the gap between girls' and boys' achievement in reading and writing.

At the time of the inspection, the school's safeguarding arrangements were found to be outstanding, and parents and carers agree that pupils are kept very safe at school. Staff and governor training are frequent so that knowledge remains up-to-date. Policies and information on safeguarding are maintained well and any concerns are pursued rigorously. The school provides good opportunities for pupils to be involved in the local community and work is underway to establish links with a contrasting school to broaden pupils' knowledge and understanding of cultural diversity further.

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These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	**2**
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	**2**
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	**2**
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	**2**
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	**2**
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	**1**
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	**2**
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	**2**

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children make good progress in the Reception classes and enter Year 1 with skills and abilities that are broadly average. Children do best in developing personal skills such as learning to share and independence. Attainment in writing is lower than in other areas of learning and consequently leaders are increasing opportunities for children to make marks and to practise the words and letters they have learnt. Good use is made of praise and questioning to develop children's confidence and understanding. For example, with sensitive support, children were able to help put the animal years associated with the Chinese New Year into order. Occasionally, in some tasks that children have chosen for themselves outside, adults do not provide enough support to ensure that learning moves on quickly.

Members of staff assess learning thoroughly and information is used to enhance the curriculum. For example, members of staff followed up children's interest in a magnetic train with an exploration of the properties of magnets. Close links between the home and school enable children to settle into school routines quickly, to enjoy learning and behave well. For example, children enjoy using the interactive whiteboard to add their names to the dinner register and parents share in assessment by writing 'speech bubble' notes about what children have been learning at home. Adults ensure that lessons are calm and safe. Leaders are working on enhancing activities outside so that they provide the same good range of activities as indoors.

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Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	**2**
Taking into account: Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

There was a high response to the inspection questionnaire. Nearly all parents and carers are pleased with all aspects of the school, especially that their children are kept safe and that the school is well led and managed. The inspection team also found this to be the case. A very few parents and carers would like the school to take greater account of their suggestions and concerns, and to help them with their children's learning and progress. The inspection team found during this inspection that a leader from the school is available every morning to listen to parents and carers, and leaders will always respond to concerns and suggestions. School staff are also happy to advise parents and carers on how children can be helped at home.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Cuxton Community Infant School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 64 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 130 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	49	77	15	23	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	54	84	10	16	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	46	72	17	27	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	40	63	23	36	1	2	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	45	70	18	28	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	39	61	23	36	1	2	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	40	63	24	38	0	0	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	44	69	17	27	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	43	67	18	28	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	31	48	31	48	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	41	64	21	33	1	2	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	52	81	12	19	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	53	83	10	16	0	0	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	**Outstanding**	**Good**	**Satisfactory**	**Inadequate**
Nursery schools	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see **www.ofsted.gov.uk**).

The sample of schools inspected during 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be. ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.

3 February 2011

Dear Children

Inspection of Cuxton Community Infant School, Rochester ME2 1EY

We enjoyed coming to see your good school. Thank you for being so helpful and friendly during our visit. We especially enjoyed your lovely singing.

These are the best things about your school:

- You are good at writing and you work hard.
- You enjoy taking part in all activities.
- You feel very safe, and well done on knowing how to keep healthy.
- We agree with you when you say that teachers help you.
- The headteacher and other leaders know what needs to be done to make the school even better.

These are the things we have asked your school to do next to make it even better:

- Make sure that you all take part when the class is doing quick mental mathematics.
- Use marking to help you understand how to improve your mathematics straight away.
- Help teachers to always give you work that is important and just right for you.

Thank you once again for telling us about your school and letting us see your work. You could all help your teachers by always listening carefully and carrying on with your good writing.

Yours sincerely

Alison Cartlidge

Lead inspector

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